

News Release



WYOMING SENATE DISTRICT 3

FOR RELEASE Immediately
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Budget Session Ends

On Friday, the Wyoming Legislature gaveled out of the 67th Budget Session. My focus this session was on Wyoming families, fiscal restraint and ensuring the policy we develop stays true to our Wyoming way of life. That is why, during these 20 days in Cheyenne, I have been focused on energy policies surrounding the regulation of CO₂, reining in government spending, providing property tax relief and ensuring our strong conservative values are reflected in the bills passed into law.

At the beginning of the session the Senate Agriculture, State and Public Lands and Water Resources Committee held a [Hearing on the Environmental Impacts of "Net Zero" and "Carbon Negative" Policies](#). True science and reality must inform our decisions rather than the "green new deal", climate extremism or Biden bucks. We must take a hard look at the future in order to protect and defend Wyoming legacy industries rather than buy in to short term fixes that will eventually ruin our economy by enriching our enemies and forcing reliable affordable energy producers out of business.

For too long, tax and spend has been the go-to strategy of our state Legislature. The budget considered by the House and Senate this Friday does not exercise the fiscal restraint nor prioritize spending in a way that our state needs. The Senate entered budget negotiations with a strong position of \$767 million dollars in reduced spending which was a divide of \$1.1 billion with the House, however, the second JCC did not hold the line on the Senate position.

Just to name a few givebacks, the committee restored roughly \$340 million to the Governor's energy slush fund, gave back the gender studies program and the requirement of a standard budget at the University of Wyoming, approved \$2.5 million for an air show at the Casper airport and approved a third raise for State employees. Initial budget numbers indicate \$10.6 billion dollars in spending for the 25-26 Biennia. In voting no, I stand with the families who do not have the ability to match the increased rate of spending that the majority of the Wyoming Legislature just approved. Our state needs fiscal discipline to ensure more money remains in the pockets of hard-working Wyoming citizens.

Skyrocketing property taxes are also creating increased pressures on people in our communities. Property taxes in the state are on track to increase more than 80 percent by 2026 to more than \$700 million. That includes a nearly 40 percent increase over the past two years. I count 20 measures introduced this session to address this critical issue.

Property tax bills that stand out for the good they will do include [SF54 Homeowner tax exemption](#), [HB45 Property tax exemption residential structures](#), [HB004 Property tax refund program](#). Together, these bills provide a 25 percent of fair market value exemption to all Wyoming homeowners; caps annual property tax increases at four percent; and expands access to local property tax relief funds. The exemption in SF54 will remove approximately 19 percent of Wyoming homeowners' property tax bill and cut the average homeowner's bill by approximately \$600 per year based on statewide averages. HB45 caps annual residential property assessed valuation increases at four percent, a compromise between the House and Senate versions of the bill. HB004 expands access to existing property tax relief funds by increasing the qualification threshold to 165 percent of a county's gross median income. The level was previously set at 125 percent.

These bills will certainly alleviate some of the property tax burden impacting people across the state. I look forward to work in the interim to discuss additional reform.

Finally, I am proud to report the Legislature moved the needle on conservative issues this session. The following are priority bills I have been monitoring:

[HB0125](#) Repeal of gun free zones, removes restrictions on gun-free zones in Wyoming, making it a safer place by recognizing the rights of law-abiding citizens to exercise their rights and responsibly carry. As of this writing, this bill is headed to the Governor's desk.

[HB0148](#) Regulation of abortions, requires surgical abortion clinics and their physicians to be licensed. This bill was strengthened with an amendment that would necessitate that a pregnant woman seeking an abortion undergo an ultrasound at least 48 hours prior to the procedure. This bill is on the Governor's desk.

[HB0166](#) Education savings accounts, creates education savings accounts for families who want an option other than the public school system. It's important to note that the House was able to pass an amendment making it clear that families will need to opt in if they want to participate. As of this writing, this bill is headed to the Governor's desk.

[SF009](#) Parental rights in education, addresses procedures for school districts to communicate with parents and guardians about their children's information. Specifically, the bill requires schools to inform parents about available health services. It permits them to decline specific services while mandating compliance with reporting abuse or neglect. This measure aims to strike a balance between parental rights and the responsibilities of teachers and school staff. This bill is now law without the Governor's signature.

[SF102](#) Foreign property ownership-critical infrastructure, would restrict America's foreign adversaries from buying or owning property that could compromise Wyoming's critical infrastructure or military bases. I am disappointed this bill died in the House Appropriations Committee. **[SJ002](#) Foreign Adversaries prohibited property ownership**, which by a vote of the people would have placed language in the Constitution to prohibit foreign adversaries including China and Russia from owning land in Wyoming also died on the same day in the House Appropriations Committee.

[SF0013](#) Federal land use plans-legal actions authorized, provides a mechanism and funding for the Legislature to take legal action against the federal government. This bill is on the Governor's desk.

[SF109](#) Prohibit red flag gun seizure, would prohibit red flag gun laws from being enforced or implemented in Wyoming. As of this writing this bill is headed to the Governor's desk.

[SF0099](#) Children gender change prohibition, (Chloe's Law) prohibits any doctor in Wyoming from performing gender transition procedures on children under the age of 18. This measure provides that doctors, surgeons, pharmacists, and other health care providers could lose their license should they allow or perform gender transition procedures or surgeries on a minor. This bill is on the Governor's desk.

Keep your eye on the Governor to make sure these important bills become law. Our priorities as elected leaders should reflect those of the people we are so honored to represent. I will continue to hold the line on the growth of government, safeguard our individual liberties and fight for Wyoming families' continued economic prosperity. To find more information, watch archived videos of the session or view interim topics visit wyoleg.gov.

About Senator Cheri Steinmetz:

Senator Steinmetz represents Goshen, Niobrara, and Weston counties. She is serving as Chairman of the Agriculture State and Public Lands & Water Resources Committee, Chairman of the Select Water Committee, Vice Chairman of the Education Committee and is a member of the Capitol Finance and Investments Committee.

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